



Water Quality NewsFlash

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Areas of Special Biological Significance – Exception process underway for site on Santa Catalina Island

– The State Water Resources Control Board is implementing a policy of granting exceptions to the Ocean Plan to allow the continued discharges of storm water and other wastes into Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). As currently interpreted, the Ocean Plan prohibits such discharges unless an exception has been granted. An exception requires the submittal of monitoring data and other discharge information as well as documentation in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The State Board has now posted the environmental documentation for an exception allowing the continued discharge of waste seawater and storm water from the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center (WMSC) into the Northwest Santa Catalina Island ASBS. The discharger is required to maintain natural water quality conditions in the receiving water, seaward of the surf zone. “Natural water quality” will be defined by Regional Water Board staff in consultation with the State Water Board and will be based on constituent concentrations at a reference station (except for indicator bacteria, which will be based on Ocean Plan bacteria objectives). If receiving water monitoring indicates that the storm water runoff is causing or contributing to an alteration of natural water quality in the ASBS, WMSC is required to submit a report to the Regional Board including proposed additional or improved best management practices as part of a revised storm water management plan (SWMP). If WMSC complies with the specified reporting and implements the revised SWMP, then it does not have to repeat the same procedure for continuing or recurring exceedances of the same constituent. This approach is similar to the so-called “iterative process” which applies to exceedances of water quality standards by dischargers of municipal storm water. Posted: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/plnspols/oplans/docs/usc_wmsc.pdf

Industrial Activities – EPA proposes general permit - On December 1, U.S. EPA released the proposed NPDES *Stormwater Multi-Sector General Permit for Industrial Activities* (MSGP). This permit will replace the MSGP issued in 2000 and will address industrial discharges not otherwise covered by state-prepared permits. The MSGP provides facility-specific requirements for many types of industrial facilities. Within the State of California, it only applies to Indian Country lands. However, it is important because state permitting programs often reference it and use the regulatory approaches developed by EPA in the MSGP. In California, both the Construction General Permit and the Industrial General Permit reference the MSGP.

The proposed MSGP attempts to clarify what a facility must do when it is determined that the discharge does not comply with applicable water quality standards. The proposed changes also include adjustments to some of the monitoring benchmarks. The benchmarks are intended to serve as action-levels to help operators improve best management practices rather than as effluent limits. For example, the benchmark for copper has been reduced from 63.6 ug/L to 14 ug/L. Cadmium went from 15.9 ug/L to 2.1 ug/L, and for the first time, benchmarks have been added for chromium and phenols. The turbidity benchmark changed from 5 NTU *above the receiving water background* to 50 NTU, applicable to only the effluent (background not relevant).

Comments are due January 16, 2006. Posted: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/msgp.cfm>

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, fkrieger@msn.com with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>